

Cheers

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by [hamstercheese7](#)

Summary

Buggy always knew when Shanks was coming, call it a hunch, a premonition, a paranoia. A gut feeling, keen observation haki. Whatever.

It always started with the same dream.

Notes

I wrote this for the defunct Shuggy Zine back in December of 2021 so please forgive any canon inaccuracies.

See the end of the work for more [notes](#)

Buggy always knew when Shanks was coming, call it a hunch, a premonition, a paranoia. A gut feeling, keen observation haki. Whatever.

It always started with the same dream. The sand burning under his feet, the sun hot on his neck. That wet humid scent of mulchy leaves and too much greenery. Of giant bugs and strange animals that screeched from the trees.

Shanks was laughing as he climbed high into the tree before him. The bark was tough under his hands. He didn't want to climb. But there was Shanks, his eyes bright, calling down to him. "C'mon Buggy!" He could feel Roger's gaze on his back, or maybe it was Rayleigh's. Sometimes it was both, sometimes it was neither.

But Shanks was calling down to him, calling him a fraidy cat. So he couldn't keep his feet on the ground. He could do what Shanks could do! At least while Roger was watching. He clung tightly to the trunk as he inched his way up, the smell of sap acrid in his nose. Shanks had reached the top, but he, Buggy, had so very far to go.

He looked up, Shanks staring out at the ocean, his eyes wide as if they didn't see it every day. Longing for that kind of wonder filled his chest, but then-

The top of the tree gave an ominous snap, Shanks' eyes going wide, a terrified childish scream!

Down he fell, the whole tree shaking! But then there was Captain Roger, grabbing him from the air and laughing as he set him down on his feet on the ground.

But that was Shanks. And he was Buggy.

He fell from the tree too, a far shorter distance, but the ground came up to meet him and no one was there to catch his fall.

He awoke with a start, a frown pulling at his lips. Mohji was snoring loudly on the floor, his fat lion hide busting ass from eating too much meat. Buggy gave him a look of disgust before hauling himself to the bathroom to take a piss.

He had a busy day of contract negotiation today, and therefore he needed to look exactly the way the Great Buggy the Clown should. Fearsome, larger than life, a tad bit of nightmare, a little touch of psycho. His new hires needed to appreciate his genius, his radiance, his sheer magnificence.

And then of course there would be the fat payout. He grinned, teeth white between red lips. Gold and velvet, silver and the glimmer of jewels. Wealth at long last. No more scrounging in shitty caves and jungles, or robbing nasty little houses.

No, now, he acquired treasure the smart way. By having someone else do all the weight lifting while he reaped the benefits. And as long as he didn't step on Joker's toes, no one cared. Government immunity really was the greatest power he had.

The dream flashed through his mind and his smile faded. For a moment, a scared little boy looked back at him in the mirror. He clenched his fist and turned away. He wasn't that dumb weak little brat any longer!

Rain lashed the window, cold and unforgiving. The clouds swirled angrily outside the shitty room he and Shanks had rented, the sound of people still partying in the streets outside loud as hell. Marines fired guns whether at pirates doing something or because they were happy that at long last, Captain Roger was dead, Buggy didn't know and didn't care.

Shanks was out, doing who knows what. Maybe that fucker Mihawk was around. Or maybe he was looking for other members of the crew. If they were here. They weren't, if they were, they would have done something. Rayleigh or Bullet or anyone!

But no one was here. Just him and Shanks, holed in together like rats. All alone, abandoned. But maybe that was better because in the fucking end they had nothing anyway. No treasure, no family, nothing. Roger was King of the Pirates and look where that got him! He bit his lip, clenching his fist so hard his nails broke the skin.

That's how it was supposed to be though wasn't it?! A final lesson from Captain Roger. In the end, it was only you and you would have to look out for yourself.

Buggy, the Great Jester grinned ferally down at the leader of a group of mercenaries he was hoping to bring into his enterprise. The man, purple hair, huge hoop earrings, and pointed beard, looked up at him not at all in the way he damn well should. He had no awe in his eyes, no fear of Buggy the Greatest Clown the World had ever seen!

The fact that he could probably, actually, most definitely take Buggy in a fight was not the point. Luckily, Buggy had two of his very strong crew members standing at the exit. See the stupid bastard get past that gyahahaha!

“Now, the bounties you’ll be bringing in, I get 70% and give you 30%,” Buggy leaned his tent of a body against the couch, anger rising as the stupid little bounty hunter raised an eyebrow.

“Nah, I’ll take 70%, and give you the 30,” the purple haired fucker picked his nails. Buggy’s eye twitched.

“You must think you’re funny,” Buggy hissed. “But I’ll have you know, humor is reserved for clowns and there is only one clown here!” he gestured at himself furiously, a knife between his fingers. That got the little fucker’s attetion. How DARE he disrespect the Great Buggy-sama?!

A panicked scurrying drew both of their attention to the entrance to the tent however as Cabaji tripped in, looking at Buggy, his eyes blown wide. “What?! I’m in the middle of-” Buggy screeched, stopping as Cabaji stuttered out a terrified “T-t-t-he Red F-f-f-!!!” before having to take a deep breath. Like Mohji, he’d gotten fat on Buggy’s glorious coattails.

“A what?”

“The R-r-red F-f-force has been spotted!” Cabaji finally got out.

Oh. What the fuck was Shanks doing here?! The stupid purple haired nobody had gone pale at the mention of the Emperor. Loser.

“What the hell does that stupid bastard want?” Buggy snarled, getting up from his couch. Negotiations would have to wait. The sooner he sent Shanks on his way, the better. Unless the asshole had something of value on him, then he could get out and leave Buggy in peace! He didn’t need that kind of attention. Government immunity only went so far!

Shanks stumbled in through the door, his clothes drenched, a rush of cold air following him inside. Buggy eyed him from the corner of his eye, that damn hat on his head making him want to vomit.

Their only thing from Roger was a stupid worthless hat!

He grit his teeth, the urge to wail and scream struggling inside his chest, but his eyes were tired of crying. Shanks yanked his boots off, not saying anything. Buggy could see in his face that he hadn’t found Rayleigh or Crocus or Bullet or Gaban or any of them. They were all gone and they didn’t give a shit about him, or Shanks or anything!

Buggy wanted to spit.

Shanks sat on the edge of the bed, Buggy rolling over to glare at the wall. “Don’t worry Buggy, we’ll find them!” Nausea rolled through Buggy again.

“No we won’t, they’re gone and don’t care about us,” he tugged the blanket up higher, his voice cracking at the end. He could feel Shanks’ eyes on him as thunder rumbled outside, shaking the

thin glass window panes.

“Sure they do, Captain Roger always said we were fa-”

“Who cares what he said?! He’s gone and none of it was true! He left us too!” Buggy sat up, glaring at Shanks, that sick feeling inside him more like pain, like he couldn’t breathe, like something was twisting inside his chest, squeezing and *squeezing*.

“Shut up!” Shanks was glaring at him now from under that stupid hat.

“Or what?! You’ll leave too, just like Roger?!” Lightning flashed, the whole room illuminated for an instant in stark black and white. Shanks curled his fist, his eyes dark as he swung at Buggy, lights exploding behind his eyes as the room flashed to black.

Buggy split into pieces, tackling Shanks off the bed! Over and over on the floor they rolled, a vengeful surge of joy tearing through his veins as he knocked that fucking hat off Shanks head so he could see him as HIM and not as Roger.

Shanks pinned him, blood dripping onto Buggy’s face from a cut above his eye. The rain lashed against the window, the wind a mournful howl of rage.

“Why are you here Shanks? Why did you stay?” Buggy whispered. Why him? Shanks who was everything Buggy wasn’t, Shanks who argued and cursed and pranked him. Shanks who didn’t go to Raftel. Shanks with his stupid, stupid, STUPID hat.

Blunt fingernails dug into the meat of Buggy’s wrist. His face was so different without Roger’s keepsake. Red hair and brown eyes, like himself, and not some pale imitation of their captain. He looked as dreadful as Buggy felt. The lightning flashed again as their eyes met and Shanks pressed their lips together.

That damned red ship was docking, Buggy’s men gawking and staring anxiously. Some brave few had their swords drawn. His red lips pulled down as he floated overhead. Shanks didn’t visit Buggy. They met on random islands, in exotic bars, passing one another in the night. No vivre cards had ever been exchanged between them, or if they had, Buggy had long forgotten where his was.

He chewed his cheek thinking, wind billowing his tent of a body like a flag. The last time he’d seen Shanks was at the War. Eyes fierce and not like Roger, except that he was. Buggy could see it, roiling beneath the surface, in the way the bastard still had an attachment to that damn Straw Hat.

Stupid Straw Hat.

So why the hell was he here? Some part of Buggy’s stomach dropped, wondering if Shanks had contracted Roger’s illness by some stupid manner of trying to live like him.

Captain Roger in the bathroom, Rayleigh trying to distract them by starting up a party but he had never been as good at it as Roger so it just made everything worse. Shanks pretended nothing was wrong but Buggy could see the way he pushed the hat down tighter on his head.

The first stars glittered among pink clouds as the gangplank extended. Buggy didn’t know Shanks’ crew. Well, besides Beckmenn and what the wanted posters offered for the rest of the idiots. Beckmenn stared up at him, cigarette lit in the corner of his mouth as Buggy yelled “What the hell do you want?! Get off my island!”

A chorus fluttered up from below “Captain Buggy told Akagami to leave!” “Captain Buggy is the best!” and “Captain Buggy isn’t afraid of anyone!”

Damn right! Especially not Shanks!

The door to the inner sanctum of the Red Force swung open, the dying light of the sun glinting off Shanks’ blood red locks. “Buggy! Long time no see!” He laughed that damn laugh, like Roger, loud and full. Full of shit more like.

“What the hell do you want Shanks?!” He crossed his arms, feet far away, tapping the floor impatiently.

“Ah c’mon, let’s have a drink! I’ve got a treasure map I want you to see!”

Business? Shanks was here on business? It warmed Buggy’s heart that the flashy idiot would come to the Great Buggy to take care of it! The dream of Shanks falling flashed through his mind, but he shoved it back.

“Treasure? Well why didn’t you say so sooner?! Break out the ale boys!” He shouted, floating away. His crew cheered, as did a number of the Red Hair pirates. Partying was old hat to Buggy, like slipping on an old favorite coat. A song and dance that he could perform without thought.

Shanks jumped onto the pier and followed after him, men splitting before him like the tide. Buggy scoffed. Show off.

Buggy gazed at Shanks’ face, peaceful in sleep. Benn was sprawled in the hammock above him, snoring. The sea rocked their small ship peacefully. The East Blue was nothing like Paradise or the Grand Line, their home. The sea they knew best.

Shanks wanted to head for there tomorrow, now that he had gotten another crew member. Wanted to be just like Captain Roger and Rayleigh. It was all about “adventure” and “nakama”. Shank’s nose twitched in his sleep.

Buggy glared at him. He didn’t, couldn’t, had never been like Roger. He’d tried, but... Roger was still dead, his blood splashing across the execution platform. Indifferent to their sobs. Because in the end, he was a selfish pirate and Buggy guessed he did get something from him after all.

All that was waiting for them by following his footsteps was death.

And if Shanks wouldn’t leave Buggy then...

Buggy quietly slung his small rucksack over his shoulder and slipped off the ship.

The night settled in, the party loud and raucous. Fire eaters and jugglers, acrobats and sword swallows. Food and dancers and music! All the things money could buy, security and admiration guaranteed!

Buggy detached himself from his tent, his body coming together smoothly. He re-tied his long blue hair in a simple ponytail down his back as Shanks followed him into his room. The door shut behind him as Buggy opened his personal trunk, pulling out two mugs and a familiar brand of beer. Cheap shitty grog.

The music hummed through the wall as Buggy settled himself at the table, Shanks staring at him

from the doorway.

“Well?” he gestured to the chair across from him. Shanks gave him a smile that Buggy didn’t like. As he sat down and the light from the fireplace hit his face, that feeling intensified. Shanks was already drunk, and his shoulders were held in such a way that reminded him of the day Roger died.

“I lied about the treasure, sorry Buggy,” he chuckled, rubbing the back of his head with his hand.

Figures. “So then what the hell are you here for?” Buggy glared at him, drumming his fingers on the table as Shanks picked up his mug and held it out for Buggy to pour into.

His hair was so red in the firelight, the scars across his eye intense in the shadows. Time passed, Buggy trying hard not to roll his eyes at Shanks’ dramatic silence. That was such a Rayleigh thing, even after all these years. “...What do you think about kids Buggy?”

Buggy choked on his beer, coughing as it went up his nose. Eyes streaming and cursing between gasps, Buggy stared at Shanks who instead of laughing at his misfortune just looked... like he was being himself. Lost without someone’s shoes to fill.

“What the hell kind of question is that, bastard?!” Buggy squawked, crossing his arms.

“I’m gonna be a father Buggy,” he said quietly. Buggy blinked. Once, twice. Waiting for Shanks to crack up and prank him. Waiting for the follow-up punchline like there always was. The dumb bastard always tried to rile him up. Goad him, hook line and sinker him.

But it didn’t come.

“You’re shitting me,” Buggy said, his voice sinking to a quiet rasp. Shanks shook his head and took another long pull from his mug. Now that Buggy was really looking, there were dark circles under his eyes.

“My crew is excited,” Shanks added after a moment while Buggy continued to stare at him, trying to digest this new bit of information. Flashes of the past raced behind Buggy’s eyes. Oden and Toki, Roger laughing as he swung their new daughter around. Ace, the son he never told them about. Rayleigh ruffling Buggy’s hair.

The Edd War, fights with Whitebeard and Teech and Shiki. Garp and Sengoku, the fear as fully grown men slashed down at him with swords drawn. The fact that he was a child not even half their height mattered not.

“Fuck,” was all he managed to get out. A cosmic joke, the kind that even he himself wouldn’t be able to pull off. Shanks snorted into his mug, a pained braying laugh.

“Yeah, child of Akagami, born to be a new threat, strong and powerful,” Shanks held up his mug next to his face, his eyes dark and smile deranged before it faded. Buggy frowned.

“You’re not gonna drop a kid on me are you? Because the answer is no and fuck you.”

Shanks stared at him for a long long moment and then let out a long sigh. “I don’t know what I’m gonna do Buggy...” he said quietly. The fire crackled and popped. “You ever think about if things had been different?”

“Different how?” Buggy looked down into his mug, the dark liquid within reflecting his face back up at him. It was easier to make out the scared kid he’d been this way. He stared into his childhood eyes, large and afraid.

“...Like if I had gone after you,” Shanks whispered. Buggy looked up at him. Loud laughter sounded through the wall, a popping boom of fireworks. If he’d gone with Shanks, he wouldn’t be here. He’d be on the Red Force, clashing with monsters like Kaido or Mihawk. The second-in-command. Shanks’ missing hand.

Not Buggy the Clown, whole and himself. The Greatest Jester the world had ever seen.

“No Shanks, I don’t,” he said quietly. Shanks looked at him, for a moment the same boy he’d been years ago, looking at Buggy in the dark as rain splattered against dirty window panes.

“...Why’d you leave too?” Shanks hadn’t worn that damn hat in years but he looked naked without it. Buggy smiled, this Shanks, the real one with vulnerabilities and fears was so much better. His act gone, put away.

“Because sometimes you can only love someone from afar,” he said gently. Shanks let out a soft laugh and took a drink.

“So, a father huh?” Buggy held out his mug as a toast.

“Yeah, guess so!” Shanks’ mug clacked against his, the sound sharp like something broke. The shadows in his eyes made Buggy roll his. Idiot. Just because they had questionable childhoods didn’t mean his dumb brat would.

“Then cheer the hell up and let’s celebrate!”

And Shanks smiled. Buggy grinned back. He couldn’t catch the bastard when he fell, but he could damn well make him feel better about it. He wasn’t the Grand Jester for nothing after all.

End Notes

I love Buggy. He's my favorite. He wears angst so well.

Let me know your thoughts!

As always, thank you for reading and you can find me on twitter as [buggyisbest](#) and as [hamstercheese7](#) everywhere else!

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